

VZCZCXRO3198
PP RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHCI #0298 2981014
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P R 241014Z OCT 08
FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2170
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0114
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2654

UNCLAS KOLKATA 000298

SIPDIS

USDA FOR DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY/ETERPSTRA
USDA FOR OFSO/JDEYER
USDA FOR FAS/OA/MYOST/WKMILLER
USDA FOR FAS/OCRA/CALEXANDER/JCARVER
USDA FOR FAS/OSTA/CHAMILTON
USDA FOR APHIS/MFLEMINGS/TBURLESON
SEOUL FOR APHIS/GEORGE ANDY BALL
DEPARTMENT FOR SA/PB, EB/TPP, AIAG HREED-ROWE
NEW DELHI FOR FAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFLU](#) [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [TBIO](#) [SENV](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IN](#) [BG](#)
SUBJECT: TRIPURA GOVERNMENT ON ALERT AFTER CHICKENS DIE IN
BANGLADESH

REF: A. KOLKATA 111
[B](#). KOLKATA 128
[C](#). DHAKA 1061

[1](#). SUMMARY: The Tripura and West Bengal state governments are on heightened alert to respond to an H5N1 avian influenza outbreak, given the recent outbreaks in Bangladesh. To date, authorities have not detected any incidents of H5N1 infection in Tripura or West Bengal in the past three months. If the Bangladesh outbreak does spread to Tripura and West Bengal, it is uncertain if the India-Bangladesh joint combat mechanism will be effective to combat an outbreak. END SUMMARY.

[2](#). On October 19, 2008, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) reported that H5N1 Avian Influenza (AI) virus had been detected in Bangladesh district of Naogaon (Reftel C). This district is located close to West Bengal's Malda, Murshidabad and South Dinajpur districts. A week later, media reported unusual poultry mortality in Bangladesh's Sylhet, Habiganj and Srimangal districts, which are adjacent to West Tripura and Dhalai districts in the Indian state of Tripura. Contacts in the governments of West Bengal and Tripura told EconFSN that no H5N1 outbreaks have been reported in either state in the past three months.

[3](#). Contacts in Tripura told EconFSN that the Tripura state government came to know about Bangladesh's latest round of unusual poultry mortality from media reports and alerted the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) to increase their vigilance along the 500-mile international border which the state shares with Bangladesh. According to these contacts, BSF is monitoring the livestock traffic across the border. Tripura Principal Secretary for the Animal Resources Department Dr. U. Venkateswarlu confirmed the mortality incident in Bangladesh and told EconFSN that he is preparing for a response in case there is an H5N1 outbreak in Tripura although he received no official communication from Government of India in this regard.

[4](#). Contacts told EconFSN that the West Bengal Government also learnt about the October 2008 outbreak in Bangladesh's Naogaon area from media reports. Malda, Murshidabad and South Dinajpur are Naogaon's adjacent districts in West Bengal although the actual area of the Naogaon outbreak seems between 30-40 miles from the nearest India-Bangladesh border. To date, the GOI has not notified West Bengal's Animal Resource Development

Department and any AI outbreaks and, therefore, the GOWB has not trigger any AI response.

¶5. In June 2008, government officials from both India and Bangladesh met in Dhaka and set up a bilateral mechanism to combat avian influenza. The attendees agreed to report avian influenza outbreaks to the respective central government ministries. As per the agreement, Bangladesh government will inform the relevant Government of India office (Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Agriculture) through the Indian Ministry of External Affairs. GOI will then pass on the information through relevant channels. If this information sharing is taking place, it appears that it is not being passed to the state government officials responsible for providing immediate response to an outbreak.

¶6. COMMENT: While the state governments of Tripura and West Bengal appear better prepared for an H5N1 AI outbreak than in the past, the bilateral combat mechanism established by India and Bangladesh does not appear to be working at the state level in India. This could lead to a delayed response if a serious H5N1 outbreak occurs. END COMMENT.

PAYNE